

67-97-82 Walters, Vernon

-Speech

Orig 1 Senator's Youth
Conference

(orig under Walters)

SPEECH

by

LT. GENERAL VERNON A. WALTERS

before

SENATOR'S YOUTH CONFERENCE

OKLAHOMA CHRISTIAN COLLEGE

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

13 February 1976

MORI/CDF

...Thank you very much.

In all fairness, in the light of what the Senator said to you, probably two or three years ago I wouldn't have been here either. But times have changed and if we have to do our job we need the understanding of the American people, for what we do and why we do it.

I would like to talk to you today a little bit about what is intelligence, how do we get it, and why it is important to us.

What is intelligence? Intelligence is information concerning the actions, capabilities, intentions, activities of foreign countries that may have an impact on our lives and the way we live. How do we get it? We get it by various means. A great deal of it we get through public means--it is quite astonishing, even in the relatively closed countries, how much intelligence is to be obtained from reading the newspapers or listening to the radio broadcasts.

One of the curious things during the war was how much information we could get from the German newspapers. The Germans have a great tradition, for instance, when anybody is killed or dies, of putting an advertisement in the newspaper and we could get the German newspapers and see a death

notice for somebody who died while fighting in such-and-such a division near Orel or Tula or somewhere else, which would tell us, at least as of that date, where that particular unit was.

We have people who have been reading the Minsk Pravda for 25 years. And if you read the Minsk Pravda for 25 years you not only know what's going on in Byelorussia, but you know a good deal of the relative move up the ladder of various people and what they are doing and where they are going.

One of the more interesting things is the listening to foreign broadcasts: what they're telling other people in different languages, and what they're telling their own people in their own language. You can sense, often long in advance of any public decision, the shift in the way they are presenting these things to their own people or abroad.

Then we collect with technical means. Technical means of all sorts which I think has been one of the great contributions the United States has made to the collection of intelligence.

I always say that intelligence is really the oldest profession; other people claim that other professions are the oldest professions. I claim that you had to know where it was before the other one could operate and, therefore,

intelligence was the first profession. And you all remember about Moses sending those spies into the land of Canaan, so this is nothing new in human history.

But in this technical thing, really the intelligence services as we know them now began during the reign of Queen Elizabeth I in England, when Thomas Walsingham went out and hired himself "five knaves." And that was really the beginning of British intelligence. It has operated ever since .

I was discussing at lunchtime how Benjamin Franklin set up his office in Paris and the British intelligence was endeavoring and they endeavored successfully to penetrate that office. In fact, when the French told Benjamin Franklin that they were going to enter the war against Great Britain, 42 hours later that information was in the hands of the British Government--and 42 hours was just about what was required to ride a horse to the Channel, take a boat across, and ride a horse to London.

As a matter of fact, an interesting anecdote: the other day I was in Florida and I had lunch with Anthony Eden, who is now 79 years old, and he was the British Foreign Minister during the Ethiopian problem with Mussolini and during the war and later he was the British Prime Minister. He was telling me about

one of his ancestors who was in America during the Revolutionary War and he was persecuted because he was very sympathetic with the American cause. I said, "Yes, but another one of your ancestors was busily penetrating Benjamin Franklin's office in Paris." And he looked at me and he said, "Oh, you know about that, do you?" Because one of his ancestors, William Eden, was the chief of British intelligence in Paris during the Revolution.

We have brought all of the genius of America in technology and science to help us get information from above, from below, from the sides, and through all of the means one can conceive.

In 1960 we had a great debate in this country as to whether there was a missile gap with the Soviet Union or not. Nobody knew the answer. Such a debate would be impossible today. We do know the answer; we do have the means of verifying what is going on.

People always think of intelligence as a force for war, but it is also a force for peace. It would be impossible for any President of the United States to sign an agreement on any kind of arms limitation with the Soviet Union or with China unless he had the means of verifying that that was being complied with. I think it is an aspect of intelligence that is not often understood.

Another aspect for which we get no credit is that sometimes you've had nations that believe that other of their neighbors were about to jump them or about to attack them. Several times we have been able to tell and reassure both sides that the other one was simply not deployed in a position to attack them, and thereby, perhaps, avoided a miscalculation by one against the other.

And, finally, because we face these closed societies in which, for instance, we have to expend millions of dollars to get information which they can obtain in our country by subscribing to magazines. They can get crosscuts of U.S. missile silos with concrete thicknesses and everything else; the sort of information that we have to expend enormous effort to get.

Now why do we need this intelligence? We need this intelligence because we have deployed today a capability against the United States--I am not talking about the intention to use it, I am just talking about the capability--greater than any that has been deployed against us since Valley Forge. In the past all of our wars have been fought with local powers, in a sense. Germany, even at the height of her power, was a European power. Basically, outside of

submarine attacks and maybe one or two freakish bomber raids, Germany had no capability against the United States. But as we look, we see the Soviet Union, whose armed forces have increased in the last five years by one million men whereas the armed forces of the United States have decreased in that same period by one million men; net difference: two million. We see the Soviet Union deploying five new third-generation ballistic missiles capable of striking the United States--more accurate and with greater range than any of their predecessors. We see the Soviet Union building large numbers of submarines that can launch missiles; we see the Soviet Union developing aircraft with capabilities against the United States as well as against their peripheral neighbors, China, or NATO Europe. We see the Soviets improving enormously the equipment of their conventional forces against NATO Europe and in the Far East. We see them improving the training of these forces: the quality of the Soviet forces is higher than at any time since World War II. We see them quite prepared through proxies and otherwise to move their power elsewhere. We see a Soviet Navy conducting a tremendous building program, able to project Soviet presence all over the world. They used to have a coastal navy, now they have a blue water navy. And we see all of these capabilities in

the Soviet Union. Tomorrow China will have these capabilities. And for the first time in our history people will have a capability to strike crippling or mortal blows at the United States; something that has not existed before.

When George Washington said "Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty," he was talking about a country which had a two-month cushion on either side. We don't have that anymore: we have a 15- to 30-minute cushion now.

So we must know what is going on. If anybody were to ask me what are the four great questions before the CIA and the American intelligence community--that is, our colleagues in Defense, in Treasury, and elsewhere--I would say that the great questions we have to answer are: Who will be in control of the Soviet Union five years from today; what will their dispositions be towards us and towards our allies; what is there in Soviet research and development today that will impact on our lives in the years ahead--in your time--and the same questions for China. These are the really enormous questions for which the policy-makers look to us.

And here I would like to emphasize that the CIA is not a policy-making organization. We simply provide the information. Sometimes they will tell us they are considering four or five options and we will say that if you take option one, this is what's likely to happen; if you take option two, this

is what's likely to happen. When I go to a meeting where policy is being discussed, I give an intelligence briefing. When State, Defense, and Treasury and the others discuss what is to be done, I don't speak. I am not in on the policy discussion. All we do is provide the intelligence on which they base their decision as to what is to be done. So this myth of an "invisible government" pulling strings and deciding policy, simply does not correspond to the facts.

Now, we have a feeling that perhaps all of this is something new and is wrong and is un-American. There is definitely a sort of campaign that intelligence is un-American, dishonest and so forth. Well, if you go back in our history there is no basis for this.

George Washington was probably the greatest consumer of intelligence we ever had. In this Bicentennial Year I have done some research on the subject of intelligence in the Revolution and it's very interesting. The first thing that I think sums up George Washington's position better than anything else is a letter he wrote to his chief of intelligence in New Jersey, Colonel Elias Dayton, in which he said this, "The need for procuring good intelligence is so obvious that I have nothing further to add on this score. All that remains for me to tell you is that these matters must be kept as secret as possible. For lack of secrecy these enterprises,

no matter how promising the outlook, or well-conceived, generally fail. I am Sir, your obedient servant." George Washington.

Then you get this business that you've got to tell everybody everything, you've got to discuss everything, you've got to let it all hang out. Well, again we have a quote from George Washington on that. One night in Connecticut he spent the night at the home of a Mr. Holcomb who was a sympathizer with the Revolution. In the morning he got up on his horse to ride on and Mrs. Holcomb came out and said, "General, where do you ride tonight?" He leaned down in the saddle and he said, "Madame, can you keep a secret?" She said, "Of course." He said, "So can I, Madame," tipped his hat and rode off.

Our responsibility is to tell our leaders what the situation is as we see it. That is why we were created as an independent organization, that is independent of any particular cabinet office. We are responsible by the National Security Act to the National Security Council, to the President, to the Congress through our appropriate oversight committees who were set forth in the Act which created us. And principally those are the Armed Services Committees, of which your Senator from Oklahoma is one of the

-10-

members to whom we report and from whom we have no secrets. Only through their support can we obtain what we need: the funds and the authority to do what we have to do.

Now in America we have had a tradition during our wars of developing a great intelligence network and destroying it immediately after the war. We've done this in every one of our wars. The one thing I will not--well I suppose I will tell you is that during the war Washington had a fort in southwest Virginia at which he trained his intelligence personnel. The only thing that bothers me is the name of the fort, the fort was Fort Looney, so we don't talk much about that. But we've had this tradition of doing this. Now in the first World War we built up a very good intelligence capability, but in 1932, Mr. Stimson who was then Secretary of State was handed a decoded message of another country--diplomatic traffic. He pushed it away saying, "Gentlemen don't read other gentlemen's mail." Ten years later as Secretary of War he couldn't get his hands on enough "other gentlemen's mail." I don't want to blame Mr. Stimson, but it was that kind of a mentality that led us to Pearl Harbor. And we were able to recover from a naval Pearl Harbor. Could our nation recover from a nuclear Pearl Harbor?

The responsibility on us in intelligence is greater than at any time in any country in history because the United States is the last best hope of freedom. There is no one waiting to pick up the torch if we drop it. It is not just a responsibility for our own country, it is the responsibility for the survival of human freedom in the world that weighs on our shoulders and it is a very heavy responsibility.

You've heard a lot about the so-called transgressions of the intelligence agencies and, yes, I can't tell you there haven't been abuses; I can't tell you, for instance, that in the 76,000 people who have passed through the CIA that we didn't have some kooks, some overzealots, some people who showed very bad judgment. We did. But I submit that the number of these things, when you consider the 76,000 people and the 27-year period, was very small. They were aberrations; for instance, you've heard about the famous telephone taps. There were 32 telephone taps in 27 years. And the Director of Central Intelligence is the only person in the United States who is charged by law, by statute, with the protection of his sources and methods.

I want to just talk about what intelligence is to the United States and how it is represented. Intelligence costs less than one penny out of every dollar that is spent

by the U.S. Government, that is to know what everyone else is doing. There is one area that has grown in importance enormously and that is economic intelligence. In the old days economic intelligence was a sort of by-product of military intelligence studies. Today, with billions of dollars in petro-dollars, in Euro-dollars, washing around the world in ways that can affect your livelihood and your job, it is fundamentally important for the United States to know what is happening; to know, for instance, what the harvest in the Soviet Union is going to be like, what effect that will have on Soviet foreign policy, how it will push them. The Chinese the same way. These are vitally important to the life and business of our nation.

Now the effort the United States is expending on intelligence, in spite of this growing area in which we are being asked to provide information, has been downward. The manpower devoted to intelligence in the United States has gone down by 40 percent in the last six years. Intelligence is today a smaller portion of the budget of the United States than at any time in the last 20 years. And yet, the missions and the complexities of the missions that are being tasked upon us are greater than at any other time. To fight inflation we must know what is going on in the rest of the

world because of the impact it will have on us. Intelligence provides us with clear, up-to-date knowledge of what is going on in the world around us.

I would just ask you what would happen do you think to the defense costs of the United States if we had no idea what we were preparing to face, if we didn't know what the Soviets or the Chinese or anybody else had. We would have to prepare for an enormous unknown. It is because we have an accurate knowledge of what they have that we are able to tailor our own requirements to face up to that in a manner which does not destroy our way of life and how we plan the expenditures of our funds. That intelligence provides us with a sound basis for developing our own military requirements, our own military strengths, and above all, the existence of an effective U.S. intelligence capability inhibits anybody who would be thinking of trying to surprise or do something to the United States. They know that we know and that in itself is a very calming effect. The very fact that the U.S. has this kind of capability is terribly important.

As I mentioned previously, none of these agreements would be possible without this. Our defense costs would soar out of sight if we did not know what it was we had to prepare against. If we did not know, you could have

an arms race that could lead to a tinderbox. It is this knowledge of what they have and what we need that makes it possible for us to keep some control and some handle on what we're doing ourselves.

Now the third means by which we collect intelligence is clandestine or secret intelligence. I often say that we carry the millstone of James Bond around our shoulders because this is the exciting part of intelligence and it really represents a very small part of what we do, but a very important part of what we do. In the closed societies which we face, like the Soviet Union, and who are conducting espionage against us on a vastly greater scale than we are conducting against them, it is important for us to know-- to get into the decision-process as to whether any of this force they have will be used and if so, where, how, and in what measure.

Many times we are in a position technically to tell what forces are in presence, but no technical means will get you inside a man's head. Only people can tell you about other people. And, so, we must use this particular method even though to some of us it may seem unpalatable.

Outside the CIA office in Langley, we have a statue of Nathan Hale. I will be honest with you, I was not one of the ones in favor of putting it there. Nathan Hale was a very brave young man who uttered some immortal lines about having only one life to give to his country. But I couldn't help but feel that any intelligence agent who was caught on his first mission and had all the evidence on him is not necessarily what we should be holding up to our young trainees. Furthermore, he committed an additional breach of security. Before he went behind the British lines he told one of his buddies that he was going to do this--and we had those people even then because his buddy looked at him and said, "But Nathan, how can you stoop so low as to be a spy?" But Nathan Hale said, "Whatever the nation needs, I will do." He also went to Manhattan to find out when the British were going to land. Unfortunately for him, they had already landed. So this is, again, one of the reasons why I was not wildly enthusiastic when holding this up as the great example to our young trainees.

But all this clandestine business is a very small part of the total budget of the CIA. But the idea that we have analysts who for 25 years have been watching certain aspects of what's going on on the other side is not very

exciting and doesn't make good television programs and so it doesn't draw much attention.

Why do we need these clandestine activities and this covert help? Well the other side has the Brezhnev doctrine which says the Soviet Union has the right to use its armed forces to safeguard the achievements of any socialist state. What we've got to decide is whether we want to have any quiet means of providing help to our friends, of whether we want to have anything between a diplomatic protest and landing the U. S. armed forces. Every nation throughout history has attempted to advance the cause of its friends and to undo the causes of its enemies. This is not something that we've done, but we Americans sometimes have this rather puritanical view of things. Like it said in the Bible, "I thank thee, Lord, that I am not as other men, a sinner like that publican." And you remember which one came down from the Temple?

The fact is, our nation must survive. We have a responsibility even greater than the responsibility to our own people. We have the responsibility to human freedom to make sure that we do not go under.

Every other nation uses these methods against us. It's all very well to say that if he is attacking me with brass knuckles, I am going to fight him with boxing gloves. But you are not going to be in good shape if you do that.

Yes, as I told you, there have been some abuses and some things we would have preferred not to happen. But again I submit that these were in very small measure and they have been distorted out of all context.

You've heard all about the assassination report. What was the end conclusion of the assassination report? Nobody was assassinated. Then you heard all about the toxins. What was the conclusion? The toxins were never used. Then you heard about the drugs. Yes, somebody used very bad judgment in giving a drug to someone without his knowledge, but this was at a time when we saw various people behind the Iron Curtain who had resisted all the pressures and tortures of the Nazis suddenly falter. And we all thought it was done with mind-bending drugs that could be used against us. We had to know something about them so that we could counter them. For instance, the United States between the two World Wars undertook not to use poison gas. That did not prevent the United States from manufacturing many millions of poison gas shells which we never used but which we held in reserve in case they were used against us.

Yes, a lot of things were discussed in a very different environment when the commitment of the United States never to be

surprised again and the commitment of the United States to contain Communism was extremely strong.

The last CIA investigation by General Doolittle told us that the United States was facing a ruthless enemy determined to destroy us by every means at its command and we must match their ruthlessness with ours and their dedication with ours.

We understand that secrecy must not be used to cover abuses. Someone asked me the other day, "How do you end abuses in intelligence?" and I said that as long as intelligence agencies, like any other organizations, are made up of human beings, you can try to minimize them. It is a foolish delusion to think that you can end them. What you must do is to establish a system where if anybody does something that is against the law or against what is accepted, you must have the means of having sanctions against them. But, again, I caution judging people today in the standards of other times is a very difficult thing to do.

We had a group of young Congressmen out to the Agency and they were discussing assassinations and one of them said, "Yes, but if anybody could have gotten Hitler during 1944-45 he would probably have been the first joint recipient of the Congressional Medal of Honor and the

Victoria Cross." And another one said, "But if you could have gotten him in 1935 or '36, think how many lives you would have saved?" And I said, "Congressman, are you advocating assassination in peacetime?" We were at peace with Germany." He said, "Oh, but that's different." Well, it was different because we knew what followed afterward. Assassination is against the Law of God, it's against the Law of Man, and its impractical for other reasons because it generally produces an even greater fanatic. So it is not (good).

Long before these investigations, within the CIA a directive was put out saying assassination would not be even considered. You didn't hear much about that; you heard about things that had happened about 25 or 30 years ago in a very different time.

Those who are against us know what we are like as a people. They know what importance we attach to fair play, to the rights of our citizens, and the open nature of our society. They can and do make full use of their advantage in not having comparable standards, or comparable moral principles, in their attempts to control or alter our society.

This is a tough, tri-polar world. In the old days the United States had allies who interposed themselves between us and our enemies. We have two giant world powers facing us today and I can't help but think that the real issue before the American people is not some of these abuses that were committed in small numbers 20 or 25 years ago, but the real issue before us is will the United States, as we enter the last quarter of this century, have eyes to see and ears to hear or will we stumble blindly forward until we have to face the alternatives of abject humiliation or nuclear blackmail. I think the good sense of the American people will win out. I do not think we will go to either of those. We will do our part in intelligence to make sure that our nation is not surprised.

All I want to tell you is that I am very happy to have this opportunity to come here and be able to talk to you because you are our only hope for the tomorrows that my generation will not see.